

*June 25, 1998*

## **Eminent Station Pomologist Dies**

by Linda McCandless

**Geneva, NY** - John Carlton Cain, Professor Emeritus of Pomology at the New York State Agricultural Station, who retired from the Department of Pomology and Viticulture at Cornell University in 1973, died on June 16, 1998, in Canandaigua, NY. He was 86 years old.

Cain had been associated with Cornell University since 1940, first as a graduate student, and then as a professor where he served the New York State fruit industry as a research pomologist for over 30 years. He was widely known for his outstanding contributions in the field of tree fruit nutrition. His studies demonstrating nutrient uptake and interactions in fruit plants were universally recognized. Cain also researched mechanical pruning and harvesting and their effects on orchard and tree design. His research brought about many recommendations for change in planting, growing, and harvesting tree fruits.



Cain cooperated with agricultural engineers in Geneva and Ithaca to develop a number of inventions that provided new types of research tools for his fellow scientists. Colleague Roger Way, Professor Emeritus of Pomology, said, " Dr. Cain was very innovative in the laboratory."

One of Cain's more unusual research collaborations occurred with astronauts in the Apollo space program. According to Way, astronauts smuggled apple seeds from a variety called 'Flower of Kent' that was being grown at the Station using a fountain pen. This variety was very appropriate for a "zero-gravity" flight, because it was the same variety which reputedly hit Newton on the head when he discovered the laws of gravity. Cain and Way helped grow seedlings from these seeds. "For years, we had three offspring growing at the Station," said Way. For his efforts, Cain received a letter of thanks from Astronaut James Lovell.

Dr. Cain was born in Blakely, Georgia, and received his B.S.A. degree from the University of Florida in 1935. Following that, he served at the Florida Agricultural Experiment Station as a research assistant and assistant horticulturist, with primary responsibilities in citrus. He came to Cornell in 1940 to pursue an advanced degree. His education was interrupted by his military service from 1942-45, when he served in the U.S. Army as a commanding officer and received a Bronze Star. He returned to Cornell and received his Ph.D. in 1946. He was appointed Associate Professor of

Pomology the same year, and professor in 1951. In 1954, he served as a Consultant at the Inter-American Institute for Agricultural Science in Turrialba, Costa Rica, and as a Horticultural Advisor to the Catholic University in Santiago, Chile, in 1964.

In 1972, Cain was elected a Fellow of the American Society for Horticultural Science. He served as President of the Northeast Section of the American Society for Horticultural Science and was Associate Editor of HortScience for five years. He was the author of over 73 scientific papers in the field of fruit nutrition, mechanical harvesting and pruning, and orchard design.

Cain was also an avid astronomer, antique collector, and bird watcher. He is survived by his wife, Marie, of 53 years, of Tavernier, Florida and Geneva, and two sons, James McRae and John Jr.

---

NOTE: A 300 ppi photo of Dr. Cain can be accessed for downloading by clicking on the photograph above. If you prefer an electronic file or a hard copy, contact Rob Way at 315-787-2357, [r fw2@cornell.edu](mailto:r fw2@cornell.edu)

**Suggested caption:** Dr. John C. Cain, Professor of Pomology at the New York State Agricultural Experiment Station in Geneva, NY, died on June 15, 1998.

---

**Contact:** Linda McCandless, Communications Services

**Telephone:** (315) 787-2417

**e-mail:** [llm3@cornell.edu](mailto:llm3@cornell.edu)

---

Return to [News](#) Page

---

